

The Pacific Is Not a Nuclear Waste Dumping Ground!

By [Pacific Elders Voice](#)

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Japan and Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO)'s reckless decision to discharge over 1.3 million tonnes of nuclear-contaminated wastewater into our Blue Pacific is a testimony to the dangers of nuclear power. No Pacific state is reliant on the nuclear power industry. The Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station (NPS) meltdown disaster of 2011 is evidence of the ongoing human, environmental and economic consequences it has upon the health and well-being of people of the Pacific. Now, Pacific Islanders and future generations will have to bear the brunt of Japan's dependence on nuclear energy as the attempts to stabilise the Fukushima disaster have led to the cost-cutting measure of discharging nuclear-contaminated wastewater from land into Japanese waters, which through the accelerated spread of ocean currents will inevitably be an act of transboundary and transgenerational harm against the Pacific peoples and their livelihoods. Starting today, the discharge is slated to last for another thirty years.

We note with disappointment that this brazen act of environmental vandalism will compound the brutal nuclear legacy of over 315 weapons tests in our region for which genuine nuclear justice has not been fully achieved. It furthermore represents a palpable disrespect towards the Pacific region's historically strong stance against nuclear pollution in all forms and commitment to a Nuclear Free Pacific, through international and regional agreements such as the London Convention (1972), the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982), the Rarotonga Treaty (1986), the Noumea Convention (1986) and the Waigani Convention (1995). We acknowledge that some of these laws and treaties were designed and agreed to by Pacific states with Japan in mind given its previous attempts to dump nuclear waste into the Pacific Ocean from the late 1970s onwards.

History repeats itself with Japan again testing the limits of the Pacific's friendship through an absence of consultation, accountability, dialogue and consensus building with Pacific states, NGOs and civil society groups. We believe that this will set a dangerous precedent that breaches the human rights of Pacific peoples, especially by other states who wish to engage with nuclear power and are looking to dispose of any form of toxic waste into the Pacific

Ocean. The plan represents an irreversible risk of severe human rights violations, especially those relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment; as well as, many others concerning the rights to an adequate standard of living, physical and mental health, safe food, drinking water and sanitation.

Japan and TEPCO's reliance on the misguided assumption that "dilution is the solution to pollution" is scientifically and ecologically unsound. We call on the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) to remain opposed to the discharge and committed to the findings of the independent panel of scientific experts that they appointed. The panel found insufficient evidence based on statistically deficient and biased measurement protocols provided by Japan and TEPCO to prove the overall reduction of the concentration of radionuclides through the Advanced Liquid Processing System (ALPS). The panel have voiced concerns with the continued presence of tritium, carbon-14, and likely some other 64 radionuclides including strontium-90, cesium-137 and cobalt-60 from the "treated" water. This will accordingly lead to varying degrees of biological uptake eventually to humans, through oceanic currents, ecosystems and the food chain.

We are equally dismayed by the IAEA's premature encouragement of the plan from as early as 2013, outdated safety standards and subsequent endorsement of Japan and TEPCO's discharge plan. There was an opportunity for Japan to be global trailblazers of responsible and ethical nuclear waste disposal with the inclusion of the voices of Japanese fishing communities, as well as, nearby affected coastal Asian and Pacific states. Instead of a United Nations remit concerned with the industry of nuclear energy and the safe use of nuclear power, we acknowledge the need for a truly independent, international and participatory monitoring regime with the close involvement of those likely to be affected states to sufficiently monitor Japan and TEPCO's environmental and human impact. For now, we stay committed to our previous statements calling for Japan and TEPCO to abandon their plans until genuine consultation is done with Pacific stakeholders. We furthermore call for Japan to be role models for nuclear stewardship in the region and appropriately consider alternatives, instead of generating a culture that lacks trust, dialogue and respect between all parties involved which will cause reputational harm to Japan.

We note with concern, Prime Minister of Japan Fumio Kishida and Japan's attempts to politically fracture the regional position of a Nuclear Free Pacific. It is disappointing to observe Prime Minister of Fiji Sitiveni Rabuka's support and other Pacific leader's backsliding statements over the past couple of months regarding this issue, as well as their refusal to deeply listen to the scientific panel appointed by the PIF, the widespread majority in their own governments and civil society who have voiced concerns over Japan's plan. We note as well the role of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) by Japan to placate and seduce leaders to approve this ecologically irresponsible plan.

Finally, we endorse the move for international action to be taken to initiate a lawsuit against Japan at the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) and seek provisional measures to protect against the transboundary and transgenerational impacts upon the peoples of the Pacific and the ocean that we all call our home. We also encourage Pacific states to pursue all available legal avenues available to them, with regard to the abuse of the human rights of Pacific peoples by this plan. Furthermore, the convening of the next PIF meeting in Rarotonga as the birthplace of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone presents an opportunity to revisit all current nuclear issues in the region including but not limited to: the Fukushima issue, the AUKUS security pact, and the nuclear tests legacy for survivors with

the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

We act in solidarity with coastal fishing communities and civil society across Japan, Korea, and China, as well as the many in Pacific states objecting to this plan. Furthermore, we act in solidarity with the 'Rally for the health of our oceans' led by many Fijian NGOs scheduled for Friday morning in Suva and echo their call for international intervention to stop Japan's planned dumping of nuclear-contaminated wastewater into our Blue Pacific.

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